

Developing a Young Adult Fictional Dystopian Society

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

This creative writing project was done to examine why dystopian novels find success with young adults. Currently, many best sellers fit into this category. They are turning into blockbuster movies. Consumers spend their entertainment dollars on these stories. This creative project looks at several stories finding this type of success and then puts its own spin on the story. The five series included in this study were *The Selection* (Cass), *The Testing* (Charbonneau), *The Hunger Games* (Collins), *Matched* (Condie), and *Divergent* (Roth). These series were read to find common themes and evaluate them. While each series had their own unique plots, there were four common themes; future version of North America, love triangle, hidden history, and three-part story telling style. These themes were each used in the creative project in which the female protagonist lived in a society becoming a dystopian instead of one who changes it.

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The Academy
By Jessica Knox

She started to zip her duffle bag and stopped. Maybe I should check the list one last time Kyanite thought. The list sat next to her bag on her childhood bed. Check marks next to every item but it couldn't hurt to add another row.

Toothbrush. Check.

Toothpaste. Check.

Personal tablet. Check.

The list continued with no detail spared. Kyanite laid items out one-by-one. She couldn't forget anything, not at Monterey Academy, the regional school for Indiana. Only the top young adults will be there and Kyanite was used to being the best.

Since entering kindergarten, Kyanite strived for perfection. While most parents pushed their children, Kyanite had to push herself. "As long as you try your best," her mother always said. Kyanite wanted to be the best. The best student, the best athlete, the best leader were all very important titles.

But now, she will have none. No one has a title at Monterey Academy. Not their freshman year.

"Everything ready to go Kyan?" Her father startled her. Kyanite turned to the doorway into her room. Her father stood with a smile and watery eyes.

"Yes. At least I think so."

"No saying 'I think so' anymore," her mother said as she appeared behind her father.

"You *know so* now. You have to communicate with confidence at Monterey Academy."

"Yes, I have everything."

"No you don't." Kyanite shot a look at her father. She went through the list one more time and couldn't find an unchecked item. "You wont find it on there." He walked in hugged her.

Her mother followed with a small box wrapped in brown paper which she placed it in Kyanite's hands.

"Thank you mama and dad," Kyanite said. "This is completely unnecessary." Money was not a big problem in her family but she knew it was becoming one.

Kyanite started crying as she unwrapped the box. She could no longer hide her nerves. Her father stepped beside Kyanite and put his arm around her shoulders. She would miss these moments the most.

Kyanite opened the box and saw a deep blue star sparkling into her eyes. It was the most beautiful piece of art she had ever seen. It matched her past and future together perfectly. It reminded her of the goals she developed at home and the adventure she was about to endure to achieve them. Kyanite found no words to express herself, a problem she rarely faced.

"We just don't want you to forget your family while you're off becoming a university candidate," her mother said.

"There's no guarantee I will make it that far Mama," Kyanite said. "I have to focus on small goals. Surviving year one is first. Then we can start focusing on university." Although it was four years away, Kyanite knew she had to make it to university. All the regional schools funneled into the university. If you were the best in your state, you got a chance at becoming the best in the nation. Only the best in the nation represent National America internationally.

"Oh sweetie, you won't have a problem there" her mother said. "You have pushed yourself every step of the way toward success. You, my daughter, can do something none of your peers have ever tried."

"What's that?"

“You are a self-motivator,” she answered. “Most of these students have had their parents driving them every step of the way. This type of encouragement from us is all you have ever needed. You set your own goals. You know what it takes to achieve them. And then, you do it. You will succeed.” With that, Kyanite’s mother embraced her, squeezing her as though she would never see her again. “I love you darling. You will... no you already are great. Kyan, at Monterey, you’ll just learn which path to greatness you want to take.”

Her mother finally let Kyanite out of her embrace before she walked toward the door. Kyanite could see in her mother’s walk the emotions she could not share. Her mother has been very successful, but being a woman, she continually has to prove herself. She must show no weaknesses including emotions. Kyanite knew how lucky she was to have her mother as a role model.

“Your mother loves you so much.” Her father broke Kyanite’s train-of-thought. “And she knows you love her too.” He always knew her thoughts without asking. The man usually knew what every person was thinking. Kyanite often wondered if it was a skill she could learn or just one of her father’s instincts.

“Yes, I know.”

“Here’s your registration packet, your temporary nametag, and your photo ID.” The elderly woman assisting Kyanite handed her each item seemingly going through the motions. Kyanite would not be surprised if Mrs. Kilbane could go through this process while sleeping. She must have been here for a long time. “Next, you must go to the uniform department. There, they will provide you with your new wardrobe for your time at Monterey Academy.” No person ever gave a specific time increment when speaking to students about time attending the

Monterey Academy. Not many made it through all four years. “As you exit, turn in your personal tablet so we can ensure all of the educational apps you will need are properly installed.” Kyanite looked towards the exit.

“Where is the uniform department?”

“There is a map in the packet.” With that, Kyanite knew Mrs. Kilbane lost interest in her.

“Thank you,” Kyanite said politely. As she turned to leave, Kyanite thought she saw Mrs. Kilbane look up and start to smile. It must be a thankless job.

Kyanite walked towards the uniform department attempting to follow the confusing map. Monterey Academy was known for its size and lack of organization. When National America decided to educate their youth with the new system, most states built brand new schools. Indiana did not have the money nor want to take it from its people to do that.

Instead, the State designated a boarding school that already existed as its Regional Education Center. At one time, students from around the world attended high school during the winter and even more would come for summer camp. Summer camps were still an option until six years ago when elementary education changed nationally to a full year calendar. Kyanite never got the chance to go to one but her big brother did. She wondered if he attended a summer camp that looked like Monterey.

The uniform department was not near the registration area. Kyanite walked past half of campus before she arrived at another line. Not long after, a blonde skinny girl came and stood behind her. As the line started to move, Kyanite turned around to face the girl who wore her nerves on her sleeve.

“Hi, I’m Kyanite. What’s your name?” Kyanite gave the girl a big smile. She tried to hide the concern in her eyes. No matter who these people are, they were all competing for limited

spots at the university. This girl could take the last spot and therefore, everything for which Kyanite had worked. But still, she couldn't help but want to make friends. Everyone wants to be accepted. Maybe Kyanite could allow herself a few friends without distraction.

"Nicole Rose." A name for the face. Kyanite would commit this to memory. Great, she thought, now I'm over thinking making friends. The line started to move again. Kyanite stood next to Nicole. "Are you nervous at all? How are you so calm?"

Kyanite thought back to her mother's masking of emotions. "Maybe a little, but I don't think we have time to be nervous. Did you check your schedule?"

"Yes but not too closely yet." Her shaking started to ease. "It is pretty full for the rest of the day. I can't believe they're not letting us eat for another three hours."

"It's only nine in the morning," Kyanite could feel a friendship forming. She already felt as though she had known Nicole for quite some time. "Didn't you eat breakfast?"

"No, I was too busy double checking that list they sent us to make sure I had everything."

"Maybe if we finish here early, we can go by the cafeteria and see if they have any snacks" Kyanite said.

"You mean dining hall," Nicole corrected Kyanite. "That's how they refer to it here."

Kyanite paused. She was not used others her age noticing her errors. Nicole was not one to be underestimated. Kyanite made a mental note to study the map closer as soon as she got a chance and to be careful around her new peers. She would not underestimate another person here.

The rest of the day was a long process. Kyanite and Nicole did make it to the Dining Hall for snacks. They were pleasantly surprised snacks were available but only to those who sought

them out. The Head of the Regional Education Center spoke to all the freshmen. Theodore Smoots spoke of the promise of the new class and his hopes for the Center. Kyanite could not help thinking every word was planned although he lacked all forms of technology that would assist him with his speech. He was well rehearsed.

After lunch, new students were escorted to their living facilities. For their first year, all new females would live together and all new males would live together on opposite sides of campus. The first year boys were near all of the older students deeming the new girls dorms the nickname "Asia." Kyanite understood the nickname. After the long walk and morning, she was ready to take a nap.

There was no time for rest. The uniform department delivered her new clothes directly to her room. It was her duty to place them in their specifically assigned areas. She had only an hour to put everything away after folding it correctly. Kyanite gripped her new star necklace as she decided where to start.

The rooms were small even though two people had to live in them. Each room contained two twin-size beds, two desks, two chairs and two wardrobes all made of matching wood. Kyanite put each part of her new uniform in its assigned area while her new roommate did the same. Kyanite learned little of her roommate during their short introductions. Tyler was first in her class in education but did not participate in athletics. Her parents focused her time completely on academics. Kyanite deemed that as the cause for Tyler's silence. She also got the feeling that Tyler was not exactly the child for whom her parents had hoped after having three other girls. Tyler was not as friendly as Nicole. Kyanite had hoped they would be living close to each other. Instead, Kyanite found her room on the first floor as Nicole climbed the stairs to the third floor to find her room.

An hour passed and a whistle blew. Kyanite and Tyler reported to the hallway as instructed. Two of the senior women stood at the end of the hallway, clipboards in hand. All new students would wait outside their doors as the intimidating older students inspected the rooms. Kyanite and Tyler's room was halfway down the hall. They would have some time before their personal inspection. The seniors went into the first room. Not even five minutes went by before the door opened again. Kyanite let out a breath she did not realize she had been holding. Her eyes grew wide as she saw the seniors pull the new girls to whom the room belonged into it.

This time, many more minutes passed before all four people emerged from the room. The younger girls with shocked silence did not look at each other while the older women made marks on the papers attached to their clipboards. Kyanite wondered what happened in the room.

Nine rooms later, it was Tyler and her turn. Kyanite could now see the nametags worn by the seniors. Katie Doyle was the nicer of the two. She had bright red-orange wavy hair she attempted to pull back. Brooke Devonte stood much taller than her peer. Her strong cheekbones and slick back raven hair reminded Kyanite of the models in the old magazines she once saw in her elementary library. Katie and Brooke entered Kyanite's room. Kyanite immediately started counting her heartbeats. This task helped her control the emotions she could feel fighting to come to the surface. Just as Kyanite reached the fifties, Brook appeared at the doorway and instructed Kyanite and Tyler to come into their room.

"How do you think you did?" Katie asked as the door closed.

Silence. Kyanite knew Tyler would not answer first. Tyler's eyes analyzed the floor.

"We followed the instructions as carefully as we could, Ms. Doyle," Kyanite said unsure of what to call her superiors.

“We use first names here. Men use last names,” Brook said. “Not bad on the room though.”

“Yeah, most of these rooms have been a complete disaster,” Katie said as she started going through Tyler’s wardrobe. She threw one dress on the floor. “All incorrect items must be put away correctly before we leave.” The dress was stored incorrectly. This is how they communicate errors. Brooke searched through Kyanite’s desks. Nothing ended on the floor. Next the bed. Still nothing. Finally, Brooke dug through Kyanite’s wardrobe. Frustration started to show on the senior’s face.

“Not bad, what is your name? Kyanite?,” Brooke said retiring her search. Kyanite nodded. “Good start. Make sure to keep it up to these standards at all times,” the passive aggressive tone in her voice was not lost on Kyanite. Tyler finished picking her remaining items and put them away properly.

“Nice job girls!” Katie said with a smile as she and Brooke left the room. Test one completed.

New students arrived a week before the new semester classes started. Older students were on leave for two weeks to go home and visit family, unless they were part of fall athletics. The administration planned to give new students their academic and athletic schedules as part of the information packet. National rules changed and dictated that 24 hours must pass before new students at each state’s Regional Education Center received their schedules. Kyanite would finally know why she was there after lunch. All new students were to report for lunch at noon and were then not allowed to leave the Dining Hall for an hour. During that time, the

administration would post the schedule on the doors of new students' rooms. Until that time, new students waited.

Instead of staying in her room on the opposite side of campus, Kyanite met up with Nicole and Tyler. They sat with a group of new students in a circle on a field near the rest of the dorms. Kyanite stretched out her legs. On her left sat Nicole and on her right Alex appeared.

"Hi guys," Alex walked into the circle. "What's up?" Kyanite met Alex at breakfast that morning. He had the fullest plate at the table but was the skinniest person there. Kyanite looked directly into his eyes when they were both standing and those bright blue eyes expressed all of his emotions. The group greeted Alex and he sat down next to Kyanite. Slowly, another person followed Alex and sat slightly outside of the circle.

"This is my roommate Steele," Alex explained the presence of a new face. Steele, a half foot taller than Alex, looked around the group. His eye met Kyanite's eyes last. She stared into his deep brown eyes for only second but in that moment, she felt as though she had known him forever. Kyanite moved closer to Nicole as the group urged Steele to join the circle. He hesitantly accepted the invitation. His eyes expressed a caution their gaze that intrigued Kyanite. She knew nothing about Steele but she wanted to know everything.

As time went on, the new students discussed potential outcomes of the distribution of schedules. Every student studied hard. Even if someone was an excellent athlete, everyone knew you could not attend the Regional Education Center without strong academics. Athletics only played a small role in international leadership.

Every two years, a winter or summer set of games were played between nations. While athletic teams often completed internationally, these games known collectively as the Olympics were the only ones that determined control of the International Health Committee. This

committee had control over important resources and their distribution. The thought behind the assignment of control over this committee came because the best athletes are believed to be the healthiest people. The national government believes a part of overall athletic success involves intelligence. Their system must be working considering they win the games nearly every year.

Kyanite participated in many athletics. In her later years, she narrowed her interests to softball, soccer, and basketball. Just because a person played multiple sports did not mean they would at the Regional Education Center. That differed from state to state. She hoped to play at least two. Physical activity helped Kyanite to focus better in other parts of her life. She also knew the importance of teamwork transcends the athletic field. Kyanite could learn more about other people and herself from continuing to play sports. Plus, she simply loved to play.

Talk turned home and as the new friend group began to ask Tyler of her old life she looked at her watch.

“It’s almost noon,” Tyler informed the group.

“We better start heading over to the Dining Hall,” Kyanite said taking a cue from her roommate. Tyler was still a puzzle to her but Kyanite decided she would put the pieces together when her guarded roommate wanted her to do so.

Lunch dragged slowly. Discussion of the news they were about to receive quickly died out as more nerves appeared. Kyanite saw Tyler’s shaking hands as she attempted to hide them under the table. Nicole tried to mask her worry with overzealous laughter. Kyanite played with star necklace. She thought of home. Although it made her sad, thoughts of her father’s huge arms hugging her and her mother’s assuring words calmed her. *I am simply going to discover the path that is right for me*, Kyanite thought privately.

A smile crept across her face as administrators announced to the new students that they could now leave. Some students jumped from their seats and ran out the doors. Others stayed seating appearing to pray. Kyanite looked Nicole in the eye. Without words, they agreed to walk together. Not five steps out of the doors, the girls ran out of small talk. Too many thoughts were going through Kyanite's mind. None of them could be shared with a person she met just over 24 hours ago. Or could she? Kyanite decided to share a lesser concern.

"I wonder if we will have any free time on these schedules," Kyanite tested the waters.

"I hope so," Nicole responded. The weight on Kyanite's shoulders lifted ever so slightly.

"I need some time to myself every once and awhile or else I can't focus." They fell back into silence but the tension was gone. Kyanite seriously considered the possibility that she may have found a new confidant.

The walk felt even longer this time as anticipation built. When Kyanite reached her door, she found only one envelope taped to the door. Tyler beat her here. Kyanite decided to open her future in private. Suspecting Tyler was already in their room, Kyanite took her envelope outside. New students littered the grounds. Some stared at papers with big smiles they could not contain. Others had looks of disappointment they were attempting to mask. Kyanite did not know how she would react to the paper. She decided to find an empty building. Kyanite walked into the nearest building. No lights were on but the windows allowed enough natural light for Kyanite to read her name in print on the front of the envelope.

She took a deep breath and opened it. Kyanite took out two pieces of paper. The first was her academic schedule for the year. Advanced English, Honors Genetics, Calculus, and Russian, all very normal classes. The fifth class surprised Kyanite. Leadership. She accomplished two of her goals. Kyanite made both the education and leadership tracks. She was so happy she did not

even want to look at the second paper. This was unexpected. Kyanite did not want to come down from this high.

Slowly, she placed the academic schedule behind the athletic schedule. With closed eyes, Kyanite took another deep breath. Her mother's words in her mind, *you'll find your path*. She already had two in front of her. A third would be confusing. Before she could over think the outcome anymore, Kyanite opened her eyes and read the page. She reread the page. Her mind raced. Soccer would start in the fall and Softball in the spring. Kyanite's jaw dropped. Only in her wildest dreams Kyanite believed she would have this type of opportunity.

She stumbled in shock not realizing her legs had been moving this whole time. Kyanite slipped and reached for a curtain. The curtain gave way. Kyanite braced to hit a wall and found that she was falling much further than expected. Her fall ended with a thud. Kyanite hit her head at the bottom of a set of stairs. Carefully, she grabbed the spot on her head that collided with the wall. Kyanite felt no blood, only pain and it she could tell it would get worse. After checking for other injuries, Kyanite walked up the stairs. She looked back at the curtain one last time before exiting the building.

The rest of the week went by in a blur. Kyanite no longer waited with her peers for more to do. She and five other new students met with the soccer coach and then the team the day after she received her schedule. Coach Flint explained his theory about the game, endurance. He wanted us to out run the cross-country team. That night, Kyanite and her new freshmen teammates went for a run or as Coach Flint called it, "a tour." The run took the girls down every sidewalk on campus. Coach Flint set the pace but warned his new players that no other run would be this easy.

Kyanite woke up the two days later starting to feel the affects of Coach Flinch's theory. She stretched her sore muscles in the dark and allowed Tyler to get some extra sleep. Though Tyler said nothing, Kyanite knew of her roommate's disappointment. Since they got their schedules, Tyler left the room for only meals. Kyanite tried to invite Tyler to different activities but with soccer practice twice a day and reading she needed to finish for class there was not much time to socialize.

When Kyanite returned to her room after reading her schedule, she found her personal tablet on her desk. Tyler already glued her red puffy eyes to her tablet refusing to look at Kyanite. Kyanite decided not to ask her roommate. Instead she picked up her tablet and powered it on. Only one new app stood out to Kyanite. She touched the new icon and a folder opened. Within the folder were folders for each of her new classes. *So it begins*, Kyanite thought. Each folder contained class readings, worksheets, and homework lists for the week. She looked at her roommate and saw a notebook filled of notes. Once again, Kyanite felt behind her peers.

She never felt behind on the field. Kyanite finished her stretches and got ready for a run. If endurance was the team motto, endurance was her motto. These morning runs kept Kyanite loose for the rest of the day. They also gave her time to process her studies. With no one else on whom to focus, Kyanite could review the reading she did last night and develop a plan for the rest of the day. On the run, Kyanite set her focus.

Deep in thought, Kyanite never saw him coming. Steele plowed into her. Luckily, she protected her head as she fell into the grass.

"I'm so sorry," Steele said reaching out a hand to help Kyanite to her feet. "I didn't see you there."

“It’s my fault for not paying attention,” Kyanite said. She looked into his eyes and paused. His height was more noticeable here as she cranked her head back. For the first time she saw what could only be described as gold flecks near the center in each of his brown eyes. No words came to her mind. Kyanite was lost and she did not know why. She looked away and began to brush dirt off her legs.

“No, it’s mind,” Steele said pulling Kyanite’s attention away from her legs and back to his eyes. For the first time, she noticed his headphones.

“What type of music do you listen to when you run?” Kyanite asked.

Steele paused and looked around. Kyanite did not mean for it to be a personal question. She could never run to music because she found herself trying to run to the beat and ruining her form. Steele looked up from the ground. Kyanite knew he was debating something. “Country,” he said quietly.

“Why do you say it like that?” Kyanite could not help but ask. “Sorry, this isn’t supposed to be 20 questions. I’ll let you get back to your run.”

“No I get it,” Steele looked at Kyanite with a look of understanding. “I play hockey and not a lot of the guys are into it. Not here anyway.”

“Oh you’re a hockey player?” Kyanite started to smile. “I get it. You have a reputation to uphold. Don’t worry. I’ll keep your secret.” For the first time, Kyanite saw Steele smile. More of a smirk, a dimple appeared in each of Steele’s cheeks. Something about the moment made Kyanite want to remember it forever. The smile seemed just for her and she forgot what she was doing.

“Thanks,” Steele said with the smile still on his face. Kyanite thought she heard a bit of a chuckle with it too. “I have to get back to my run but I’ll see you around Ky.”

That's right, running, Kyanite thought. *That's what I was doing.* "See you later," she said with a smile. Kyanite watched Steele turn and start running again. No one called her Ky before, but she liked the way he said it. After wiping off the rest of the grass, Kyanite returned to her run thinking of Steele all the way back to her room.

"What's going on with you?" Nicole asked.

"Nothing," She caught Kyanite off guard. "Why?"

"You haven't stopped smiling all day. Did something happen? Do you know something I don't?" Kyanite had not been able to focus all day. Now, Nicole sat on her bed while Kyanite attempted to organize her desk. Practice was fine but during this time when she normal studied, her mind wandered back to Steele. The memory of his dimples made her smile even now.

"I don't know what's wrong with me," Kyanite said honestly. She didn't. No boy ever distracted her like this before. She knew how ridiculous she would sound even to Nicole if she said it out loud. Other kids dated each other. Kyanite knew that but her eye was always on her career goals. Those relationships seemed unnecessary and they usually did more harm than good. Kyanite never put herself in a situation that could potentially harm her. She shared her emotions because they were always positive. Here, at the Regional Educational Center, Kyanite was full of nerves like every student.

"Well, when you figure it out, let me know. I have to get something done tonight," Nicole stood up and left the room. Kyanite wished Nicole had stayed. If she opened up to her, Nicole could help. Their friendship continued to grow as each person shared a bit more. Nicole also made the tennis team and her classes were more difficult than Kyanite, but her schedule lacked a

leadership course. The competition was not direct between the two girls making a friendship form easily.

“Are you going to bed anytime soon?” Kyanite forgot Tyler was in the room.

“I wasn’t planning on it but I just need to read on my tablet. We can still turn off the lights if you need.”

“Good.” Tyler jumped from her bed and flipped the light switch. Kyanite heard a different tone in Tyler’s voice. She let it go. This week changed everyone’s lives in many ways. They must all handle it in different ways. Tyler climbed back into her bed while Kyanite got her tablet ready for the night. With one final thought of Steele, she dove into her reading for the night.

Kyanite now looked forward to her morning runs. The next several days, she ran the same route at the same time. This was not easy. Coach Flint’s endurance training worked on Kyanite. She now ran at a faster natural pace. Still, each morning, she ran into Steele just not literally anymore. They would talk for a couple minutes and continue on their ways. The smile set on Kyanite’s face for the day.

One of these mornings, Steele and Kyanite made plans to see each other later. After a long first week, administrators left Saturday afternoon open for new students to mingle. Kyanite and Nicole ate lunch together. The nerves off all new students started to ease as they survived the first week. Kyanite noticed only very few were no longer around. Most students that arrived Monday still attended the Regional Education Center. Conversations with fellow students now eased where they were once forced. The week of new experiences made these new friendships surpass what had been growing for years.

Kyanite felt good. She never let any of the small situations get to her. Her mother taught her who she was and how to handle even the toughest situations. Kyanite knew she could get through any situation. No one put her in a difficult situation. Yes, this coming Monday classes began and so did the competition for the select few spots at the university. Until then, Kyanite and her friends could just get along and forget about all the stress they were sure to endure in the upcoming months.

She smiled with ease knowing that she had another 24 hours to relax. Nicole and Kyanite walked toward the center of campus from their dorm. Alex joined them but focused more on a weird cube game than the conversation. No weird silences occurred anymore. It seemed as though they talked about anything. Kyanite even told Nicole about Steele. Nicole had more experience in that area. She once dated a boy back home. They decided to end the relationship when Nicole found out she was to attend the Regional Education Center. Kyanite now understood Nicole's original hesitation when they met. She had to hold herself together after leaving someone to whom she was very close. They all did.

When they finally reached the center of campus, Kyanite recognized only a small number of the people who were there. Everyone came out of the dorms for the afternoon. Even her roommate, Tyler, left her room. All of the new and returning students stood around talking to each other. Kyanite scanned the crowd for Steele. When she did not see him right away, Kyanite turned to talk to Nicole.

Nicole's jaw dropped. She nodded to Kyanite to look in a specific direction. Kyanite gave her friend a puzzled look before turning. In that direction, Kyanite saw her shy quiet roommate kissing Steele. She did not even know they knew each other. Had they ever talked? Kyanite stared at the two people for what seemed like minutes. Tyler knew about Kyanite's feelings for

Steele. Her roommate was in the room when Kyanite spoke to Nicole about the situation. Kyanite once again felt very naïve. She should not have let herself begin to explore those feelings.

Tears began to fill her eyes. She couldn't let Steele or anyone see the red come to her cheeks. She turned and ran away to the one building she knew no one would look for her or anyone: the arts building.

Kyanite sprinted through the door. She turned and ran and turned before she found the gray curtain hiding stairs to a basement. Sliding behind the curtain she pulled out her tablet, turned on the flashlight app, and wiped away her tears. Not yet she thought.

Carefully, Kyanite walked down the stairs rubbing her head. It still throbbed as a reminder of the dangers this so-called safe school contained. Slowly, Kyanite realized she was reaching the end of the stairway. She finally allowed the tears to flow. As she turned off the app, she started to sob. How could Steele choose Tyler over her? Kyanite had never come in second. Especially not in something she had thought as trivial. Boys never got in her way. She was too busy to worry about them. Kyanite had better goals to accomplish and nothing would stop her.

She reached for her star necklace, an action that was becoming a habit. Her parents came to mind. Their encouraging words rang in her ears. Tears continued flowing from her eyes even though she refused to open them. Steele's face remained clear in her mind. She thought of his eyes and smirk. Her favorite look that he would give her as she discovered his dimples.

No, she had to shake that from her mind. Steele chose another but she needed to change her focus. There was one goal when she arrived at Monterey Academy: earn her place among the top of the class to continue her education to become a leader.

After a few deep breaths, Kyanite opened her eyes. It didn't change anything. Without her tablet's app, the basement was completely dark. She wiped her damp hands on her legs and shook as she turned on the flashlight app once again. Before she started back up the stairs, Kyanite decided to take a quick look around. Opposite of the stairs stood a single doorway. The door was slightly ajar. Someone had left in a hurry.

With hesitation, Kyanite reached for the doorknob, her mind consumed with curiosity and thoughts of Steele fading into the darkness behind her. Before stepping into the room, Kyanite flashed the light around. Her jaw dropped and questions came to her mind. Before Kyanite were countless bookshelves filled completely with thick leather-bound books. In the center of the hidden library, a single table held an old desktop computer. Kyanite only recognized the machine from history books.

Kyanite walked to the table and inspected the ancient machine. Everything seemed to be in place so she started up the computer.

After she got the computer started, Kyanite found the light switch to turn on the lights. On the computer, she found a directory of all the books. Each title came with an author and summary of what could be found on the pages. Kyanite had never heard of any of the authors. They wrote stories of which she never heard and places she did not know ever existed. She recorded every title of interest and its location. She had to know more. There was so much knowledge even in short summaries Kyanite began to feel overwhelmed.

She looked at the clock on her tablet. 20 minutes until administrators locked the girls in their dorms. Kyanite picked a novel from the list on her tablet. She grabbed George Orwell's 1984, cleaned off the dust and tucked it in her sweater. Kyanite shut down the computer, turned her tablet's flashlight app on, and powered off the lights. With a deep breath she shut the door

and climbed up the stairs. Her secret stairwell led to so much more. It reminded her of why she attends the Regional Education Center. Kyanite got her focus back and she was ready for the following week.

By the time she returned to her room, Kyanite had forgotten about what led her to the arts building in the first place. Walking through her door reminded her. In the room, Tyler lounged on her bed with a triumphant look on her face. Kyanite said nothing. More important things consumed her thoughts. She changed into her pajamas and fell onto her bed hiding the book as best she could through the process.

“Fine, I’ll get the lights” Kyanite heard Tyler say. She said nothing in return. Kyanite knew she was behaving childishly but she was not ready to deal with the situation. Instead, she opened the borrowed novel.

Hours passed and Kyanite kept reading. It was unlike any story she had ever read. Early into the morning, Kyanite closed the book after reading the final page. She selected the document on her tablet with the titles of all the novels she wanted to read. Kyanite decided which novel she wanted to read next. After her run, she planned to go exchange the novel for another.

As Tyler snored quietly across the room, Kyanite got lost in her thoughts. Why had she never heard of Orwell before? Even more so, she wanted to know why those books were stored in the bottom of a building no one used. Did some one put them there as storage? No. The books were definitely being hidden but from whom? Did they not want students to read these unique works? Or are they stopping another person from destroying them?

Kyanite could not stop the thoughts and scenarios going through her mind. She got out of bed and decided to get ready for her run early. Kyanite stretched and stayed to her normal

routine. As she was running her normal route, Kyanite arrived at the spot where she normally stopped and spoke to Steele. He stood there waiting. She ran right by him. Steele tried yelling something at Kyanite to get her to stop but she kept going. She wanted to get to her secret library as soon as possible.

After her run, Kyanite quietly went back into her room to grab her tablet and the book. She hid it under her sweater and left again. The art building was left open once again. Nearly every student had free time this morning and chose to spend it sleeping. Kyanite slid through the door feeling unwatched. She found her curtain and stepped behind it. Once again, the app on the tablet lit the stairs.

The door slowly opened with Kyanite's pull. She could not believe her eyes when she looked into the room. Only a few of the books still resided on their shelves. So many of the collection Kyanite found less than 24 hours ago was gone. Her breaths quickened and she began to panic. She used the list on her tablet to do inventory. No a single book from her personal list remained. Some one knew she was here yesterday. They specifically took the books from her list. Kyanite grabbed a book from the shelves at random. She wished she could save more but she did not know how much time she had before another person returned.

Kyanite sprinted up the stairs and out of the building. When she got back to her room, Kyanite decided to check her tablet once again. It had been out of her possession at the beginning of the week. Administrators already uploaded some data to it for her classes. And then Kyanite spots it. Hidden deep within the tablet's stored data was a tracking device and another that allowed remote access to the camera. An administrator was aware of all that Kyanite knew. But they allowed her to stay this long.

With the knowledge that she was being watched, Kyanite knew every moment was a test. She must not share the knowledge of the hidden library with anyone. She sat at her desk with a pen and a piece of paper. She began copying the digital list over. Before she could finish, the document on her tablet disappeared. Kyanite checked everywhere for the file. Someone remotely deleted. This scared Kyanite more than anything. She sat back with opened eyes feeling hopeless.

Hours later, Kyanite stepped back into line for another inspection as Brooke stared at her. There was nothing she could do. Administrators knew about the history stored in the basement of the art building, may be even some upper level students knew, and they were hiding it. They may be hiding it from the future or protecting it. She reached up and squeezed her star necklace. In that moment, Kyanite decided to believe the latter. There are good people in the world and Coach Flint, Katie, and she were some of them. Knowing this, Kyanite could continue on. And then she smiled outwardly.

Author's Statement

Introduction

When I was young, my father told me a story every night before bed. I'm sure he and my mother read to me too, but what I remember most was when my father created his own story. Sometimes I got to help. I wish I could remember our stories. I do remember the joy I felt as my father and I laughed through the night. Of course, these stories always contained happy endings. Happy endings led to happy dreams. Those moments grew my love of story reading, storytelling and story creating.

Currently, popular books include young adult fiction. Every best selling bookshelf in stores features these novels of this genre that take place in dystopian societies. Many of these dystopian stories have transitioned to the big screen and found similar success.

I greatly enjoyed reading and watching a majority of these stories. More importantly, I found them inspiring. One eye-opening characteristic of these stories was the number of them driven by female protagonists. These leading ladies are not just sitting by as a man rescues them. They drive the plot, making change in their respective societies. A majority of these protagonists fight for justice, not a man. They make the change they want to see in their world. I am so glad future generations have these fictional characters and the women who wrote them as role models.

One question I often had when reading or watching these stories was "How did these utopian societies develop into dystopian societies?" Each story unveiled these backgrounds when the author thought it was appropriate. And each time I read these parts, the same question came to my mind, "What would a person similar to the protagonist do as this dystopian was being developed?"

That question sparked the idea for this project. I would use my inspiration to write my own dystopian story but instead of writing its downfall, I would write its creation. Because I wanted to stay with the female protagonist theme, I would only use similar novels. This eliminated books such as *The Giver* by Lois Lowry and *Maze Runner* by James Dashner. Instead, I drew from five different dystopian series: *The Selection* by Kiera Cass, *The Testing* by Joelle Charbonneau, *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, *Matched* by Ally Condie, and *Divergent* by Veronica Roth.

I read a majority of the novels in each of these series to find what themes led them to success. While each series had its own unique plots, there were four common themes: future version of North America, love triangle, hidden history, and three-part story telling style. I will warn readers now that there will be a discussion of later plot points and some twists in these series so, SPOILER ALERT!

Summaries of Inspiration

In Suzanne Collin's *The Hunger Games*, Katniss Everdeen volunteers to enter the 74th Annual Hunger Games of her nation. These games force children ages 12 to 18 to battle to the death for the honor of their district. A centralized government forces its districts to designate both a male and a female child to participate in these yearly games to remind the districts of what war within a nation does to its people. The centralized government controls all the resources of the nation and what its people do for a living based on the district in which they reside. Katniss, the protagonist, finds herself inspiring a revolution through her actions during the Hunger Games. It is then up to her to be the face of a revolution but she is not the leader. Katniss decides the only way to change the government of her nation to one of the people is to kill the leader of the revolution. (Collins)

I enjoyed reading this series. Collins throws her audience immediately into the middle of the action. Her female protagonist grows from an individual who only cares for a select few to a woman who sees the big picture. Nearly every book I have read in this genre has a love plot line and this is no exception. But the love story is not the only driving force. It complements the realities of life and death, ignorance and acceptance. I also really admire Collins' use of symbols and the way she incorporates memories into current action. No part of the story feels out of place.

The best way I can describe *The Selection* is that of a story during a time when *The Bachelor* television show might be used as a realistic way to find love for royalty. Kiera Cass wrote this dystopian novel with a monarchy as the government. Her protagonist, America, is selected to represent her province in the process in which Prince Maxon would choose his wife. America originally wants no part of it because she believes she is already in love with a childhood friend. Throughout the process, the protagonist discovers how love should truly feel and more importantly, the dark history of her nation. She decides to share with her nation what she has learned even if it upsets the King and causes her to lose the one person in her life who makes her stronger. (Cass)

I hate how much I like this series. It took me reading the series three times to realize why I enjoyed it. At face value, Cass writes a love story that just so happens to overthrow a monarch. The second and third readings allowed me to really dive into the purpose of the love story. In this series, the protagonist starts out thinking she is in love with a boy but discovers that love is so much more than she thought. This is a process through which all girls go. They do not know what love is but think they do. Then a heart gets broken and it seems as though the world is coming to an end. That is until they discover what true love is. Cass did an excellent job writing

this process in an exciting world full of all the current popular themes in young adult fiction.

The *Matched* series is somewhat similar. It, too, is driven primarily by a love story. Ally Condie wrote of a world in which the government picks whom its citizens are to marry. Her protagonist, Cassia, is accidentally matched with two young men causing her to question the system. She must do so in secret because authority figures are watching her. She excels academically and could potentially fill a leadership role in the society. As she discovers she is drawn more to the young man to whom she was accidentally matched, Cassia's world changes and she can no longer simply follow the government's orders. (Condie)

It took a lot to finish the first book of this series. The plot was nothing like I hoped it would be. It relied so heavily on the love story and ignored other potential plot lines. Condie missed the mark for me as an audience. Her story moved slowly and lacked action. She filled it with her protagonist's reflections on only her love life. Every time I thought she would comment about her society, the plot switched back to the love story. This style stopped me from continuing the series. I found more inspiration elsewhere.

The Testing brought forth an interesting concept of elite students receiving higher education in a singular place but also how to control them. Joelle Charbonneau's story shows her protagonist, Cia following in her father's footsteps as she competes in the testing process and then attends the school as he did. Cia does listen to her father as he warns her of what could happen in her future. That is what he can remember. The authority figures of the school erase the passing students' memories of the testing process. The failing students die. Cia balances her education between learning as the officials want and assisting with a revolution. She must discover whom she can and cannot trust as she figures out who is on which side. (Charbonneau)

Once again, an author places her audience in the middle of the action. Charbonneau

shows her audience the characteristics of her characters through the actions they take. Inside the mind of her protagonist, the audience puts together pieces of the puzzle as they discover more about the society in which she lives. Cia is not distracted by a love interest. Instead, the two work together to succeed.

The *Divergent* series also has a love story that assists the protagonist as she becomes a better person. Veronica Roth wrote of a society where division of personality types is more important than family. The faction determines the life of a person. Each citizen makes one important choice – in which faction will they live their life. The protagonist takes the test that is supposed to determine which faction fits their personality. The test does not work on Tris. She is different because she possesses qualities of multiple factions. From then on, Tris fights for her life in a society to which she does not belong until she learns the society is just a lab experiment by outsiders. (Roth)

Roth did something none of the other writers did. She created a new conflict in each book of the series. This made each book a great story but very long. My favorite part was the relationship between the protagonist and her mother. Even though Tris's mother dies in the first book, she continues to learn more about her mother and therefore herself. It shows a great mother-daughter dynamic and how those around an individual influence them.

Reasons for Written Choices

All five series take place in a future version of North America. A major war or climate catastrophe caused the people of the United States of America to adopt a new form of government. In *The Selection*, an oral history lesson is given to the remaining girls in the selection process. The professor asks her female students about the third and fourth World Wars, their origins, and the aftermath (Cass). Roth does not reveal the origins of her dystopia until the

third novel in the series, *Allegiant*. This story explains the necessity of Tris's dystopian city. Those running the society from afar are attempting to restore civilization back to their ideals after years of war.

My story takes place in a United States of America transitioning into a dystopian society. Because it is the beginning of a new dystopian society, the government is undergoing the transformative process. At this point in the story, the audience has yet to see the reason behind the national government's expansion. The audience does see the increasing role of the national government. One of the first signs of the transitional government is the name. Because of the federal government's increasing role in the lives of its citizens, the name of the country changed from the United States of America to National America. States are no longer referred to as states because they only carry out the laws of the federal government. The citizens live in regions instead of states. This is similar to the citizens in *The Hunger Games* living in districts (Collins) and those in the *Divergent* novels living in factions (Roth).

Each series also contains a love triangle. The *Divergent* and *The Testing* series have different takes on the love triangle which will be discussed later. In the other three series, the protagonist finds herself in a love triangle with two males. Katniss in *The Hunger Games* demonstrates feelings for both Gale and Peeta (Collins). The government in *Matched* "matches" Cassia with Xander but she finds Ky more suitable (Condie). The protagonist in *The Selection*, America, is fought over by her childhood love, Aspen, and the man for whom she is competing, Prince Maxon (Cass). Each of these series forces the protagonist to choose one while both of the other points of the triangle seem to only have eyes for her. For *The Selection* and *Matched* series, this decision drives a majority of the plot. The decision between Peeta and Gale in *The Hunger Games* serves as a subplot as the protagonist endures a more transformative situation.

I could not ignore this major theme but I could put a twist on it. Because my inspirations all included a love portion, I gave my protagonist, Kyanite, a love interest. Instead of giving her two males from which she would have to choose, I gave her love interest, Jefferson Steele, two female love interests. This felt more realistic to me. In my personal experience, I noticed more girls “fighting” over boys during their formative years than vice versa. I also used this love situation as a vehicle to move the plot to what I consider a more important part of the story.

The *Divergent* and *The Testing* series explore a different major life decision that is not solely based on a love life. In the final book of the *Divergent* series, *Allegiant*, Tris dies for her beliefs. Yes, she does have a love interest in Four, also known as Tobias, but she decides her cause is worth her life when she could have continued to live with Four “happily ever after.” Cia in *The Testing* finds a companion in Tomas but her father told her not to trust anyone. She uses that advice even more so after her superiors erase her memory at the end of the first novel and during the second as she tries to piece together what they erased. These series have a love plot line but it does not completely drive the story. The love interests of these two female protagonists play a supportive role. They are not the center of the story and yet they push the protagonists to succeed.

The hidden history is also a common theme in these young adult fiction stories. In *The Hunger Games*, the capital controls what is taught in the school system and determines which schools get to learn (Collins). In *The Selection* series, none of the history is written down. Students only learned of history through word-of-mouth. The one exception to this rule is *The Testing*, where only students with extensive knowledge of history are selected to further their education.

I decided to continue this theme of hidden history but also add a touch of censorship. The

government is starting to pull this historical information from the educational system. My story's government also realizes the truth shown about society through its fictional pieces. That is why books such as *1984* were hidden away along with history books. Even comments on society through fictional pieces can be dangerous to a government trying to control its people.

Every series I read for this project consisted of three books. In the first, the protagonist discovers the problem of the society in which she lived her whole life. The second book reveals a twist as she attempts to change her fate. The protagonist finally defeated the antagonist in the final book while also changing the society in which she lives to a freer version of civilization. The final product saw a government where citizens had a voice.

In *The Academy*, Kyanite discovers a problem in the changing society she lives. She notices rules changing and decisions being made for her and her peers. One of the ways the government maintains control within the school is to give students a sense of authority. They have the best minds, athletes and leaders in one place. This could be dangerous to the government. Instead of allowing the students to become angry about their situation, they established an order of superiority.

The students being selected are told they are the best. The sense of being chosen over their peers gives the students at the school the feeling that attending the school is a privilege. We do not see what happens to the children who were not selected. Kyanite does not know what happens so the audience cannot know. Because the society is undergoing changes Kyanite's generation is the first to go through the government's established process. Her parents went through a similar process but with much more freedom.

Some students at Monterey Academy, also known as Indiana's Regional Education Center, go through a leadership program. As students advance in the program, they gain

responsibility. Of course, it is a false sense of responsibility. In later parts of the story, Kyanite will discover that adults running the academy are actually telling the students in the leadership program what to do and say. The students will not find out what happens if they disobey orders until Kyanite is put in that situation in the second part of the story.

Besides the responsibility, they also feel authoritative over their peers. They put their peers at the school in “their place.” This directs the other students’ negative feelings toward the students instead of the government. But the students do not act upon this emotion because they do not have the time and their success in the academic and athletic parts of their schedule give them a sense of purpose and goals. These purposes and goals are so important to the students they focus completely on those outcomes. They wear blinders to achieve them. Their success in life depends on it. None of the students question the system because they are too busy trying to succeed in it: none of the students until Kyanite.

If I could change one aspect of the story it would be Kyanite’s reaction when she sees Steele with another girl. It did not seem to fit her character, but I found it necessary to move the plot. As I reflect on the decision, I realize I cannot make a perfect character. If I were happy with every choice she made, she would be unrealistic. Her outburst is also a result on the new stress that comes with a life-changing situation such as attending a new school and moving away from home. As a mature adult, I do not like her reaction but it is probably more truthful than if I were to go the perfect character route.

Symbolism

The star necklace represents a hope and dream that is unattainable. Other young adult novels each contain a reminder of a home that has another meaning behind it. For example in *The Hunger Games*, Katniss has a pendant from a close friend that also represents the turning of

the government on itself (Collins). This is the Mockingjay pin that eventually becomes the symbol of the revolution. The Mockingjay is an animal hybrid created because of the Capital's desire to spy on citizens during an earlier uprising. They made a bird called a Jabberjay that would repeat what they hear back to government officials. These creatures mated with Mockingbirds. Their offspring could then only repeat tones they heard. This made them useless to the government who had to leave the animals because they could no longer control them (Collins). Kyanite wants to become a great leader of her society. She wants it to be one where the people are content and free to make their own decisions. This is not possible because the government is working to establish a society that is the opposite.

One part I enjoyed writing was the mother-daughter relationship. In each series, there is a significant relationship between the two females. The daughter usually does not understand her mother until the end of the series. In the *Divergent* series, Tris does not understand why her mother chose the faction she did until Tris learned her mother was born outside their society. When she learns why her mother immersed herself there, Tris finds strength within herself because of the woman who raised her (Roth). Similar situations are seen in the other series with the father-daughter relationship being a simpler one. I continued that trend but I only have the perspective of being a daughter. I believe I could have portrayed the relationship more fully if I could also see from a mother's perspective. I attempted to show Kyanite's mother's care for her but also the concern she has for being a positive role model.

All of the series use an uncommon name for their female protagonist. Katniss is a type of plant (Collins). America is a former country (Cass). Tris makes up her own name when she changes factions (Roth). For my female protagonist, I looked up gemstones. I was drawn to Kyanite because of its colors and the uniqueness of the name. It is not popular enough to be

immediately recognized as a gemstone but is believable as a name.

The final decision I made was the title of this piece. The title is *The Academy*. This is done because four out of the five book series I read for this project were named after significant life events. In this story, the significant life event that changes everything for my protagonist is her enrollment at the academy. The entire series will take place there. It is the place where Kyanite will transform into a better woman even if she does not stop the government from becoming dystopian.

Conclusion

I greatly enjoyed not only writing this project and exploring my imagination, but also the research through reading such inspiring stories. It was great to read this material with a more mature point of view. I appreciate the growth of each protagonist and hope the younger audience learns from the stories. At least, I hope they relate to the stories in a way that makes them realize they are not alone in the world. Other people go through tough times and feel as though the world is ending.

This project was a lot of fun. I always wanted to write a fictional story. In my dreams, there are always new adventures. Sometimes their creativity surprises me. It is amazing to go into these different worlds. I am so lucky to remember some of them. This project has given me the opportunity to explore one of them while also taking an educational approach. I learned how much work goes into putting together a story. A decision a writer makes in the first part of a story will impact a different part of the story much later on. Catching foreshadowing has always been one of my favorite parts of reading. The planning that goes into these amazes me but also inspires me. I enjoyed writing my own piece and I hope to continue to explore this story and more.

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